

S.L.C.C. JOURNAL

3/85

The Newsletter of the San Leandro Computer Club for Atari® Microcomputers

Our Next Meeting

DICK SCOTT

Hi there!! All you good members of the SAN LEANDRO COMPUTER CLUB. I hope that you have been supportive of our last guest speaker, Miss Christine Clark, representing the "DYSAN CORPORATION" and purchased some of their GREAT DISKETTES. I, for one, am certainly appreciative of her "great presentation" on the manufacturing, quality control, and the care that goes into making certain you get the finest diskette on the market.

Have you ever been driving across the desert and seen what appeared to be water ahead of you in the road? But, when you get there, alas, what appeared to be "cool, clear water", just up and faded from your view!! No water, just more of the same old road!!

Now, I'll tell you all about the guest speaker for the March meeting. If you will recall at the last meeting, I mentioned that "Electronic Arts" had asked me to call them back in a couple of months, and I was hoping that "LUCASFILM" would be sending us our next guest speaker. That picture of the desert is exactly what I have come up with, nobody from "LUCASFILM", "EPYX", or "ELECTRONIC ARTS"!

I guess that it will be one of those meetings that you may be pleasantly surprised; because, Tom and I are doing everything to make certain that when you leave the meeting, you will have learned something about the ATARI COMPUTER or some software. We just might come up with a guest speaker yet!! So don't give up and miss this opportunity to be surprised.

(Asst. Ed. Notes: STOP THE PRESSES!!! Just when we thought we were without a speaker for the March meeting, Dick Scott gave me a call to come out of retirement to attempt to book someone for this meeting. Well, I haven't many contacts left (bit the bullet due to the SLCC curse, remember?), but this gave me an opportunity to make some new contacts. I was getting little response from the new Atari, so I thought I would call Sig Hartmann, President of Software.....Yes, a real voice said "Yes, I do believe in user's groups, and I don't want to just pay lip service to you folks." So we will get the latest information from the new Atari. Watch for next month's issue for an indepth report on this important meeting, and even better than that, DO NOT MISS THIS MEETING!!!!.....Tom.)

From The Editor's Desk

RON SEYMOUR

I would like to take this time to say something that I have wanted to and have said in the past. This is a fine club and it is one of the main reasons that I enjoy working on the Journal with Tom Bennett. Making the Journal a success has been a project that Tom and myself have tried to accomplish all this time. It takes time but we have believed that it is time well spent. Through some sort of minor miracle we have picked up the right to Tom Tisby who joined the staff last month. We are excited about him coming aboard, this brings our staff up to a mighty three!!! This is one of the reasons that some things might slip through uncorrected. So when you see there is a mistake, please consider the reasons this happened. We do our best to please the rest and all help is greatly appreciated.

Sometimes when I am at home, writing my article and hoping that everyone is doing the same, my mind and heart slip into a state of wishful thinking, dreaming that all the articles will be turned in on time. Then the dream fades as my mind reminds my heart that this is only a dream and everybody is volunteering their time. Then I think, wait, so are we! Because of that the articles should be in on time. After I read one's article to find out that their time is well spent, I realize it will help the Journal and the members of the SLCC.

So remember if you contribute to the newsletter, we would love it. Remember we try to get it in by the deadline. The faster we get the articles, the better job on the newsletter. When our time is cut, the Journal suffers.

It really looks like the SPECIAL EDITION is gathering a good head of steam as we enter the final month and a half. What started out as just a dream for Tom and me is now turning out to be something really worth while. Participation from the club has been great, but we still could have some more help. Outside interest is fabulous and names of people in the know are coming in left and right.

We have some commitments to write for the Special Edition from Bill Wilkinson, Gary Furr (Designer of the Atariwriter and printer drivers), and Jerry White (Chatterbee, Poker Sam) courtesy Antic Publishing.

This special edition is just the thing to show of the talents and attributes of the club and its members. So if you would like to type, draw, or anything to help out, call me at 537-3183 or leave a message on the Key System.

West Coast Computer Faire

TOM BENNETT

The San Leandro Computer Club for Atari Microcomputers is proud to announce that we will again be having a booth this year at the West Coast Computer Faire. But this year our booth WILL BE DIFFERENT!!

After all of our complaints about the non-response from the new Atari Corp. towards users groups in general, we had a dramatic turn-around this last week.

The first change was that Neil Harris, the new Editor of the Atari Explorer (Atari's "house" consumer publication), was assigned the duty of user group support to take over for Brian Kerr. Neil seems to have that rare energy that gets things done, and we should see some major changes in the extraordinarily weak communications with the strong core of Atari users groups. One of the first things he told me was that he was going to hire a full time person in charge of user group support (if interested, and have some experience with user group communications, call Neil at (408) 745-2168).

But the big announcement is that our guest speaker this month, Sig Hartmann, referred Neil Harris to us to assist us at the West Coast Computer Faire. Atari WILL NOT be present at the Faire (only the largest consumer computer show in the nation, I reminded Neil). Neil said that Atari would have to devote about 35 people to man the size of booth that was reserved for them, and that is only about 1/4 of the personnel of the new Atari! They just could not afford it at this time.

I had asked Neil for some help on getting some equipment, handouts, and banners, and he said he would see what he could do (where had I heard that before?). But an hour or so later, I got a call from Neil saying that they will support us 100%!! He said that Jamie Copland, Vice-President of Marketing, had given him the following to offer: machines, software, pamphlets, banners, 1000+ Atari tee-shirts to hand out, and most importantly, they will sponsor a charity raffle from our booth for the first publicly released 520ST computer!!! (Do booth coordinators qualify????). Antic Magazine may also be getting us some magazines to give away also!

What this all means is that the SLCC will hopefully be the first to show the general public the new Atari line. This should be the busiest 10' x 10' booth at the Faire! We called our good friends at ABACUS to share a booth next to us at the Faire, but they could only get the booth across from us. So between the two of us, you should get a pretty good look at what is new. That should be a busy aisle!

Suddenly, offers to work this booth have come in without any effort on our side. But we still should need help for Monday and Tuesday, April 1 and 2. Contact me if you are interested.

WEST COAST COMPUTER FAIRE
MARCH 30 TO APRIL 2
10:00 AM TO 6:00 PM
MOSCONE CENTER, SAN FRANCISCO
BOOTH 732

S.L.C.C. JOURNAL

The San Leandro Computer Club for Atari Microcomputers is an independent, non-profit organization and users' group with no connection to Atari Incorporated. Membership fees are currently \$20 per year, or \$12 for six months. Membership includes access to the computer library, subscription to the Journal, and classes when held. Permission to reprint articles in any non-commercial publication is permitted without written authorization, provided proper credit is given to the San Leandro Computer Club and the author. Opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the S.L.C.C.

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FULL PAGE:	\$48.00
HALF PAGE:	\$20.00
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JOURNAL SUBMISSIONS

The SLCC Journal will accept any articles written by members on any topic found pertinent to the club. We will accept articles in any form, although we would prefer articles be submitted on Atariwriter files.

The following Atariwriter parameters are used:

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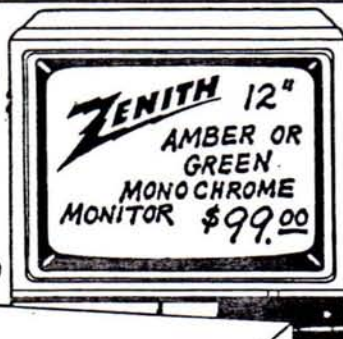


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President's Report

PHIL MITCHELL

** IMPRESSIONS **

There sure are alot of people mad at Atari! I mean it, almost everyone I've talked to lately has some kind of ax to grind with the Tramiels. Educators, Professionals, User groups, Retailers, Service Centers, even high school kids; and the funny part is they all have different complaints. I hope J.T. really knows what he's doing. Case in point: I recently received a letter from the Milwaukee Area Atari Users Club:

"The purpose of this letter is to inform you all that because of the lack of support from and communication with the "NEW" Atari Corp. that Milatari feels the time has grown too short for us to put together a show (Tari-Con) for 1985."

The letter, signed by Gary Nolan, President of MILATARI continued:

"For Atari to not support a show dedicated to it's product is hard to imagine. But to ignore it's existence is shameful. Does Atari plan to ignore owners of it's new XE and ST computers once they've purchased them and have them in their homes? Is their only interest in those who have not yet spent their hard earned money on a computer system yet? The established user base is one that could do alot for Atari. They're dedicated, vocal and for the most part knowledgeable about their computers. Abuse or ignore that dedication and you lose more than future owners, you lose the largest sales force around. And once you lose them, you'll never get them back."

That's a shame, the last Atari convention in Michigan died a horrible death, in part because of non-support from Atari, and now this, I wonder if Jack knows how many people he is upsetting? But let's be fair about this, the last Taricon was held shortly after the company changed hands, (they were very busy getting rid of staff at the time) and they just were not organized enough to really help support anything, up to and including their computers (error 130). But I have heard rumors about a possible west-coast Atari show, if they can find enough volunteers to pull it off, and don't forget, Leonard Tramiel came to us and "faced the music" directly. I'm sure they do care and it's just some kind of communication gap or misunderstanding. After all isn't a loyal, vocal customer base that makes clear what they want, every company's dream? Warner had the same problem, only not as bad (error 9 at line 1985).

I remember giving a very similar speech to "The Old Atari", and receiving an answer amounting to "We don't care what you want. We know better than you do, what you need" They didn't listen and they lost money, now, I'm no expert but it seems like the Tramiels have the same attitude. I love my Atari, no matter who owns the company, I know many people who hate using their IBM's & Kaypro's at work and can't wait to get home and play with their Atari. Patience is the key, Warner didn't listen and they were replaced, if the "New" Atari doesn't listen the same may happen to them,

and eventually someone will listen, maybe. (error 170).

It's clear to me that the "New Atari Corp." supports user support as long as it's the users who support it.

As President of the SLCC, my "pay" is the respect and friendship of people in my area, and the help I receive from those I have helped in the past. What do I get from Atari except more phone calls? Owning an Atari puts you in the Rodney Dangerfield area of the computer world, and always has. My advice (and who am I to tell the founder of Commodore, how to run his company?) is to establish a user group support dept. and make nice, before there's no one there to help support the new XE's & ST's if and when they are released (error 136).

What puzzles me is why is everyone waiting for something to happen? It seems to me that there is a large user base of customers needing support and software now. A short chat with the Manager of the HOME COMPUTING CENTER at Bayfair Mall, revealed an interesting fact; Atari Software business is brisk, supply is short, not demand. He even complained that the difference between Atari and Commodore owners was that Atari owners will try a new piece of software right away, where Commodore owners wait to see how a program is reviewed before purchasing it. We have lost several guest speakers to the "We're waiting to see what happens" excuse. Waiting for what? Aren't we a large enough force to be important, regardless of what happens? Maybe that's why computer companies and wholesalers are doing poorly and user groups are becoming more successful than ever. Mr. Chris Crawford called me the other night, over a concern he had after reading my last column. He felt that reading the Journal kept him in-touch with the feeling and needs of all of us. I urge everyone to join and use the club, it's one way to stay current and active no matter who owns the company or how successful they are.

Phil's Copier Corner

Let me introduce you to the Club's newest member. It weighs 213.5 lbs. is 22.2" long, 15.2" high and 25.9" wide. The Copier we bought is a Royal 115 Dry electrostatic "desk top" copier (a stand came with it). It has a moveable platten and copies sheets, books and objects onto plain bond paper, transparency film, or offset masters (that's how they've been doing the newsletter up to now) and will produce 15 copies per minute. The drum is good for 100,000 copies and we have a spare. Several club members have experience maintaining this model copier, including myself, and I'm sure service will be no problem. It looks real nice in my computer room, and having my own copier is a real luxury, of course if my time becomes a problem then it will go to whoever volunteers to help with the newsletter. If anyone would like to learn how to operate and maintain it, or possibly even keep it at home in a few months contact me at one of the meetings.



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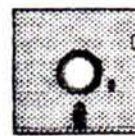
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MIKE SAWLEY

During the past few months we have been learning the commands and features of a F.O.R.E.M. XL BBS. So far we have learned how to log on and get a password and what sort of access level you should expect when your password becomes validated. We learned what all of the command characters mean and most of the control codes used to control the flow of data from the BBS. We also saw how to download a file using the X-modem protocol. Finally we learned how to read messages, both in the public and private mail sections.

Now that we know how to get stuff from the BBS, it is time we learned how to put stuff ON the BBS. The two ways you do this are UPLOADING files and ENTERING MESSAGES, both public and private, into the system.

SHARE THE WEALTH!

To UPLOAD (send a file or program) to the BBS requires you to set up your terminal program to SEND with X-MODEM. To do this with most any version of AMODEM, press the [SELECT] key and then [S]. You should then type in the file specification. It should be exactly as you have it named on your diskette. If you are using D1: as the drive, then you need not type D1: since most versions of AMODEM assume (or default) to D1: if nothing else is given. You can now set up the BBS. From the main #Go prompt, type [U].

The BBS will ask a few questions about your upload:

FILESPEC: The BBS wants to know the name of the program. You may type in from 3 to 8 characters starting with a letter. You do not need to give a drive number or extender (D: or .XXX) as the BBS will take care of that itself. If you do type these characters, the BBS will strip the extender and colon and you may end up with a file on the system called D2MYPROG. Also, pressing [RETURN] here will abort to the main prompt.

HOW MANY SECTORS IS: Please answer with a single density sector count. If you are not sure about the length, give a generous estimate. If you underestimate a disk full error may result. The BBS may tell you that it has more free sectors than your file requires, but will also tell you that there is not enough room. This is because the free sector count is the total space open on all drives. There may not be enough room on any one drive to accept your program. Also, the BBS protects space on D1: for its own needs.

ACCESS BY: You will be asked to specify who may see the file and download it. You can let all callers see it or you may tell the system to only let it be seen by the Sysop. There is a third choice you may make but arrangements have to be made in advance. It is used for uploading text files for publication here in the Journal. If you have access to this third choice and use it, then only the editors and the Sysop will see your upload. This way the general public will not have access to your work until it is published.

ARE YOU USING X-MODEM: The best and most reliable way to send a file. If you don't have a terminal program that

supports this error checking protocol, see our disk librarian and he can set you up.

WHAT IS THE LANGUAGE AND CATEGORY: There will be menus for you to choose from. Be as close as possible in your selections from the menus. This information will be displayed when another caller looks at the downloads so he/she will know something about your file.

There will be a few pauses during this process while the BBS has a look at the drives and checks to see that your file name is unique and that there is enough room to accept the file. If all is well, the BBS will tell you it is ready for you to begin the send. At the end of the transfer, the BBS will tell you if the file was received successfully. And we thank you

LETTING YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!

In order that we may hear from you, the BBS supports several message bases, an Electronic Mail section and a private message to the Sysop.

The message to the Sysop option is the only one you will be able to use if you don't have a validated password. Just press [L] from the main #Go prompt and you can start typing in your message.

The Electronic mail section is entered from the main prompt with the [M] key. You may now read or send mail. To send mail, use [S] from the Select: prompt. You will be asked for the subject and the addressee. Pressing [RETURN] at either one will abort. Mail can only be read by the addressee, so make sure you have the name spelled correctly or use the search feature to let the BBS enter the name for you. It is possible to address Electronic Mail to ALL, but no one will be able to see it since that is not a valid name.

To post public messages, first go to the message base of your choice with the [Z] function. (You can now use the message base as was discussed last month.) There are three ways to post messages. You may use [E] to enter a message from the main #Go prompt, you may [S]end a message from the Select: prompt or you may [R]eply to a message that you have just read.

If you [R]eply to a message the TO, FROM and SUBJECT fields will be automatically inserted by the system to reflect the message you are replying to. If you [E]nter or [S]end a message, you must supply a subject and an addressee. Pressing [RETURN] will abort from the subject request and will address the message to ALL from the addressee request. You may also type in the word ALL if you like.

If you have followed the instructions so far regarding entering messages into the system, then you have come to the point where the message editor is active. It will display the following:

MESSAGE EDITOR COMMAND SUMMARY
/A=ABORT /S=SAVE /? or /H = HELP

1)

You may now begin typing in your message. One of the first things you will notice is the word wrap feature. This means that you DO NOT have to press [RETURN] at the end of each line. The editor will determine where to end one line and begin another. When this happens, you may not see your key strokes if you are a fast typist, but they will be registered and will be displayed as soon as the editor catches up with you.

Anytime during the message entry, you may abort to the main #60 prompt with the /A command or you may edit your message with the commands that are found by typing /? or /H. After you have your message just the way you want it, a /S will save it. The commands MUST be entered as the first characters on a new line. The backslash character \ is required so the system can tell your commands from text.

So much for this month. Next month we will have a detailed look at each of the editing commands and tie up a few loose ends.

Software Review

TOM TISBY

LISTER PLUS PICTURE PLUS

This month we are going to review two utility programs from the same software manufacturer. They are: LISTER PLUS and PICTURE PLUS both from NON-STANDARD MAGIC Software.

PICTURE PLUS is a utility program with the amateur user in mind. It's a printer utility (Epson, Prowriter, Mannsman-Tally, NEC, etc.) that becomes very easy after reading the instructions the first time (it was for me). On the disk are the many(unprotected for your modification)programs from which you will create the night away. They are: Lister(which will list your Basic programs (Atari characters included!) to your printer in any different font you please to be appropriate. Included on the LISTER PLUS disk are many new and exciting fonts(which I use more than any other fonts), to be used for the Lister program or any other(theirs or yours). If you choose not to use a special font, you can always use the standard Atari font. Also included on the disk is a program called Type-A-Line which can be used to create a professional (with some patience) spreadsheet to be used with all your business and non-business applications. The program must be told what to do however from scratch. So don't expect it to perform miracles just by touching a few option keys. But that's the fun in having a computer; using the computer as a tool for your creative talents.

If that's enough to satisfy you to buy this great program, then how about this: a graphics 8/7+ picture dump to your printer. It will dump any Micropainter compatible(62 sector) file to your printer in any one of four sizes, small to big, inverse to normal, centered, block left or right. The program is dynamite!!!

PICTURE PLUS also created by Non-Standard Magic, is another incredible program which should be in your software

library right now!

If you've always wanted to modify a KOALA, TOUCH TABLET, B/GRAPH or MICROPAINTER file to suit your needs, well then here it is!

You can add TEXT to your program in any one of the FIVE DIFFERENT HEIGHTS. You can also modify the colors of the program, luminance on the Epson, and Prowriter, and if you don't have one of these compatibles, then you can use their DRIVER CREATOR UTILITY(included) to make it compatible with yours. The program is menu driven (as is LISTER PLUS), and can support two drives. You can even move the entire picture to the left or right, up or down, as far as you want! Try that with any other program! You can even border the picture with any one of four colors(or 252 other patterns of your choosing).

There are a lot of programs out there that can do some of these functions, but not all. If you were to buy all these program to match what these two programs can do, you will probably spend a few hundred dollars easy. Now if you're smart, and take my advice, you can save \$\$ by buying just these programs (costing under \$50.00 for both).

NON-STANDARD MAGIC, you have done an excellent job!!! I even read that they have also wrote a JOURNAL PLUS to keep a personal diary on disk. It suppose to include a personal code so that others can't read it!!! If it's anything like these programs, I know it will be HOT!

NAME: LISTER PLUS
COMPANY: NON-STANDARD MAGIC
PRICE: \$19.95 APPROX.
VALUE: 10 (1 WORSE, 10 BEST)
COMPLEXITY: 9 (BUT USER FRIENDLY)
DOCUMENTATION: 9
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Assembly Line

FRANK DANIEL

Well another month has gone by. It seems like just last week I was at the main meeting (Hey wait a minute.. IT WAS last week! Boy, these deadlines sure are getting sooner!) Well onto the SIG business.

The February meeting was very interesting. I gave a short lecture on doing direct screen writes, how they can be applied and some examples were shown. John Manning also gave us a little insight into some of the non-standard methods of disk erasures.

Now for the 'I THOUGHT VIDEO GAMES WERE USELESS' department.

It seems that someone was playing around with his 'SHUTTLE CRAFT' game and found that he could land the shuttle with only the directional rockets. The author of the game upon hearing this, tried to find the error in the program. He failed to find the bug, so he called his friend NASA to find out where his simulation was incorrect. Well to make a long story short... NASA ran the procedure through their simulator and it worked!! It is now part of the emergency landing procedures for the space shuttle. (I think Commodore's marketing staff choked on that one. Blip..Blip..)

Well, I'm sorry to say this, but its time for that truly boring part of my article.. the tutorial. Last month I left your computer hung up. How this was done, as I said, was by indefinitely delaying a non-maskable interrupt. To be more specific, I told you to reset the Stage 1 vertical blank vector to an address with no return. AHH, another buzz word... VBlank.

The Vertical Blank is that time when the TV's scan beam goes from the bottom right corner to the top left corner. It's also that black bar you see between the top and bottom of the picture on old TVs when the Vertical Hold wasn't set right. This blanking happens 60 times a second (actually it happens more than that due to interlacing for a good picture, but for the purposes of programming times). During this time the ATARI does quite a number of things. Some of which are the updating of the real time clock, updates the attract mode variables, refreshing the color registers and updates the system timers.

After the interrupt handler has completed its processing, there is some 'FREE TIME' left for the programmer use. During the immediate VBlank there is about .0011 seconds left and about .011 seconds in the deferred. Doesn't sound like too much time does it? But to the 6502 MPU, that works out to be 2,000 cycles and 20,000 respectively. That is plenty of time to do just about what you would want to modify the screen display. In fact, most of the good graphics games have the displays changed during the vertical blank. This so you don't get any un-sightly sudden shifts in the screen.

OPPS, I see by the clock its time for me to close up. (Yes, us assembly programmers DO sleep sometimes... Regardless of what our wives and girl-friends say!)

Happy St. Patrick's day everyone!

Secretary's Report

PAUL GIFFORD

San Leandro Computer Club
Main Meeting 5 Feb 85

Yes boys and girls, it's time for another exciting episode of 'Columns for Filler Space'. As we last left our hero, it was 2011 and he was diligently taking notes, trying to keep his eyes (and hands) off of the guest speaker...

2011 Meeting starts; early this time. Prez Phil talks about the SLOC Flea Market (cleverly disguised as hard/software swap). He then introduces the club officers and other important people.

2023 Paul Gifford (where have I heard that name before?) gets up and talks about special buys at B&C Computervision. This was a mistake, because not only did no one care (actually, there was 1 person), but B&C never sent me the ad they promised. Phooey.

2026 Tom Bennett talks about the Special Edition Journal, and how important it is for all you readers (reader?) to submit programs, article, artwork, anything to make this a success. He mentions that Printshop, the long awaited printer utility, is due out on 31 Jan. (Home Computing Center used it to print the border on their ad). Tom is in charge of the beta test group for DOS 2.5, which he talks about, so if interested, see him.

2031 Dan Chun, unsung hero of the tape library (yes Virginia, there is a tape library). Contact Dan for more info.

2035 Richard Scott, our fine program director, lets us in on next month's speaker... Epyx-Lucasfilm (who cancelled -phooey). He then introduced the lovely Christine Clark of Dysan. (I am NOT a chauvinist pig-don't I say that about all our guest speakers?)

2038 Ms. Clark talked about all kinds of things...the company is located in Santa Clara, the different types of rotating magnetic media products, what a disk is made of, difference between hard and soft sectors (you do NOT squeeze them to find out!). She went into detail on the care and feeding of disks- why not to use the back side, don't write directly on disks (with a pen, of course). She then talked about how to store your disks (look on the back of a disk sleeve for details). Dysan has a technical hotline 800-552-2211, from 0730 to 1700 (7:30 am to 5:00pm). Dysan will answer questions on compatibility problems, how to deal with lost data, etc.

2126 Dick Scott then takes over, and then Phil, and then, at 2130, Mr. Public Domain himself...

2130 Nate Hood demonstrates the Floppy of the Month, a fantastic disk he puts together every month.

2139 BREAK!

2203 Phil quiets down the remaining members (all 3 of us). He puts to the membership a motion to buy a copier for the club for \$900. Passed. A motion to give Tom B. and Ron S. \$600 for the Special Edition Journal. Passed. A motion to pay the club officers. Failed. (No respect!).

That will do it for this month...A final word. Phooey. (Sorry Phil, it's such a nice word though). On who? People who come to the meetings month after month, without buying a membership. Some of them sell stuff at the Swap, and try to bum newsletters off of Jim Hood. All together now...Phooey!!

Save 'Call to Glory'

Software Review

SGT. SLAUGHTER

Hello Gamers!

Well, once again I find myself sitting at the keyboard of my Atari 800, pondering which games I should feature for this month's column. Recently, a supplier of possibly the greatest games for any home computer, Electronic Arts just announced to us at the SLCC that they were pulling out of the Atari market to see if Atari would live or die. It's a rather morbid thing to do, because their pullout might just tempt other companies to do the same. It would be a shame to lose the makers of some of the most awesome games, like M.U.L.E. and Archon, but only time will tell if EA will be coming back to the Atari market...Hopefully they will.

Enough doom and gloom here! This month's columns will be on Synapse's Alley Cat and Sega's Tapper.

ALLEY CAT

Now, most of you don't know this, but I am a really big cat lover...I don't own one, but I love them just the same. I can't express how much I love Alley Cat for the Atari! This game follows the antics of a black cat who is trying to win his girlfriend's heart by going into windows and capturing gifts for her. Some windows contain a fishbowl, where you have to catch some fish and avoid the eels. Another has 3 ferns on a bookshelf and you have to knock them off and avoid being bitten by the nasty spiders. All in all there are 6 different tasks that you have to complete. Every time you complete a screen, a row of smiling cat faces light up- the quicker you completed the screen, the more faces light up and the more bonus you get. Then you must enter a window where your kitty girlfriend meows from. When you enter this window, you find yourself on the bottom row of an array of hearts. Other cats regularly patrol the other levels, and trying to jump up when they're

around causes you to be knocked down a level (plus a wonderful representation of a cat arching its back and hissing at you!). Eventually, you can make your way up to the top and kiss your girlfriend, and POW! Fireworks abound! And to top it off, you also get a bonus and another cat!

This game is a piece of videogame art. It has to be one of the most interesting games that I have laid my paws on in a long time! It's a very innovative idea ("interesting and unique" are the words that my Apple friends managed to choke out between gasps of amazement), the graphics are top notch, the sounds....You have to hear them to believe how good they are. The cat meows, the fish tank bubbles and has sonar pings, the cat fighting the dog is so realistic....Its just purely unbelievable that you could do this on any computer! (but, if any computer is capable of such a feat, the Atari is it, right?). I give this guy an A+, 10, 100% mark on my chart. If you haven't seen it, you're missing out. The Sarge says check it out.

TAPPER

Remember how I said that Sega was on its way up in the videogame world? Well, my friends will testify how I hate to admit I am wrong, but after Tapper, I can hardly believe that a reputable software company would put out such a lousy piece of garbage. If you haven't seen Tapper in the arcades, the premise is deceptively simple. You're a bartender, stuck all by yourself in a bar, and then all of a sudden, a bunch of rowdy drinkers come in and start ordering drinks. You have to appease all of the drinkers in the bar, and then you move onto the next level. Otherwise, if the drinkers reach the end of the bar, or you drop a dirty glass or you serve too many glasses of Mountain Dew (Yea, that's right, Mountain Dew...How many of you there want a Mountain Dew after a tough day at work? This game expects you to believe that Punk Rockers in a punk bar want Mountain Dew to drink...Riiiiiiight!) you lose a man. The arcade was such a popular game because it had excellent graphics and music-but they certainly weren't above what the Atari is capable of doing. But the Sega version is so incredibly terrible, I am embarrassed to have it in my disk box. The graphics are sub-standard, and the music is only 30 notes long. After the 30 notes, it restarts, driving the player slowly insane...It isn't a challenge at all. The game play is so simple that I can't believe that anyone over 11 will be interested in playing this game for more than 15 minutes before it gets put away, away, away back in the disk box forever...Sega should have realized that Tapper was not a substantial game by game play-only graphics and music kept it alive. Without superior graphics and music, the game falls flat on its face. Look for this sucker in the \$4.95 bargain box in about a month!

Well, that's the column for the month, gamers! If you would still like to reach me, you can at a brand new BBS run by my friend the Jackal. Its in the city, running on Mop Fore! Check it out! The Syndicate BBS 415-668-7168.

Until next month, good bye and good gaming!

At Ease,
Sgt. Slaughter

Hardware Review

JIM WARREN

MPP AND ME

Santa came late this year for me. A friend of mine and I ordered MPP-1000C modem by mail. This was three weeks before Christmas. There was a model change (from 'C' to 'E') which caused a delay in shipment of about two months. But the new model (MPP-1000E) was worth the wait. We both received our modems within a few days of each other. Mine is an autoanswer, autodial, sleek little number with rubber feet and a removable power cord coming out of the back. It is ivory in color and looks a little like a Hayes with three lights in front to tell you when it is on, dialing or when someone answers. I am pleased! My friend's is almost the same but is grey, has no little rubber feet and the power cord is "built in" (that is to say it is simply pinched between the two halves of the plastic case without so much as a notch to mark it's embarrassing departure from the back). After seeing my modem, my friend is not pleased! Cheeeerp looking is how he described it! If you buy an MPP I wonder what yours will look like? Let me know, I am curious about how many kinds of boxes MPP puts the goods in.... Hmmm... how many kinds of goods do they put in the boxes?!!

The MPP modem plugs into the number two joystick port obviating the need for any interface device. There are two phone jacks in the back (one for a telephone and the other for the line). Both modems (the ivory, rubber footed one and the footless, grey pinch-body) worked well right out of the box with no problems. They both came with a terminal program on cartridge called "SMART TERMINAL" and a little (but complete and quite readable) 24 page manual. The "SMART CART" takes full advantage of the autoanswer nature of the modem. You can set it up to answer the Phone and then automatically send or receive stuff (sort of a mini BBS!). I don't think that I will ever need that but if I'm not going to be home when you plan to send me that next hot program that you wrote, be sure and tell me so that I can fire up the "SMART CART" and be ready for you!

I have read and heard very diverse opinions about the "SMART TERMINAL" program, so before I give you my views let me say that MPP sells a driver program that allows you to use other software with the MPP (This driver is necessary to route everything thru the joystick port). I have this disk with the driver programs on it. The driver programs are not public domain but there are several sample terminal programs on the disk including a BBS that are in the public domain. If you have an MPP, sooner or later, you are going to want to use other software (no matter how good the "SMART CART" is or isn't). And the driver program is essential for using any software other than the "SMART TERMINAL" software that comes with the modem. Take the cost of that disk of programs into consideration when contemplating the purchase of the MPP modem! I don't understand why MPP did not make that driver program part of the original purchase. I would seem (to my egalitarian little mind) that this would make

their modem even more useful and thus more attractive in the market place. They also mention, on an addendum to the manual, that the "smart terminal" version 5 contains an enhancement that allows the loading and operation of a modified screen driver written by Richard Renner, which allows 64 columns by 33 rows with no hardware mods. Why not just "include" that in the shipment of the modem? Oh well..... it's available, it says on the addendum, at (503) 967-9875.

Well! How about that "SMART CART"? Is it "superb" as I saw in print somewhere or "wretched" as I saw on our own Key System? I think that both of these extreme descriptions of this "adequate" program are hysterical. I understand neither the wild praise that I have seen written nor the damning condemnations of "DUMBTERT" that I have heard talked about. The program will do any thing that you want done period! (Assuming you attend to a few little foibles in the program that are not, at first, apparent) And as I said already, it makes complete use of the autoanswer capabilities of the MPP modem. It is not the most fool proof of programs however. If, for example you have 2000 bytes of buffer space left in your memory and you try to down load a program that is 2001 bytes long....too bad....you just made the wrong choice daddy! You should have checked the size of the program before downloading it and chosen the direct to disk option. Also even if you did check the size of the program before down loading, the direct to disk option does not close the file automatically when the transfer is complete. You have to look at the disk directory upon completion of the transfer in order to force the closer of the file (this is the slight bug admitted to in the manual). This is the kind of thing that you get used to as you use the program. It is also the kind of thing to which you really shouldn't have to get used (my opinion!). The program should stop when the buffer is full and give you the option of dumping to disk. (And we should all be rich and never grow old!) In fairness, I should mention that this very failing is one of my favorite features of the program. Not the part about being s.o.l when your buffer is full but your down loading file is not "empty", but the fact that you can partition the memory into ten individual areas and load stuff into them or send stuff out of them to a variety of devices (S:,E:,D:,M:,C:,P:) and you can do so instantly by pressing option repeatedly to toggle on and off the save or send. This I find useful for "clipping" stuff out of BBS message bases or sending pre-typed messages. The program even has a little editor with which you can edit and prepare text for any of your buffers. The program will keep a list of numbers and a short description of each and dial the numbers automatically. that's good! Unfortunately that list is only ten numbers long....that's bad! The unlimited data base of numbers that is allowed with the Amodem programs is one of the reasons I like using them. Also, they all seem to have a more cheerful color to them. I find the white on black of the "SMART CART" depressing. Some of the Amodem programs allow you to change color. The "SMART CART" is not THAT smart. But when I am using the Amodem programs I miss some features in the "SMART CART". If, I had to be

stuck with just the SMART TERMINAL software on the public domain stuff, I would choose the SMART TERMINAL software since it works so directly with the hardware. Luckily, thanks to the driver program, I have options.

Reading my review over again it seems that I am on the verge of regretting my purchase. From the descriptions that I have heard of the "C" model I think that if I had ended up with that model I would have been disappointed. But I am pleased in general with my "E" model. To sum this all up then, the hardware is quite good, I think, the software is adequate, the price is right (you have to spend MUCH more money to do better), and I would buy the MPP-1000E all over again, even if I did end up with a footless, grey, pinch-body.

Library/Floppy Update

NATE HOOD

This month the good software is coming in kind of slow, so the Disk-Of-the-Month isn't quite finished. I still have about four hundred sectors to fill up. So far though, the floppy look great! If you like adventure games, you'll love this month's floppy because there are two of them on it!

Here's the great programs that I've found for the floppy (so far...)

LIFEXPCT

This is a neat program... it tries to figure out your life expectancy. I hope that it isn't very accurate though, otherwise I'm only going to live to be 63!!!

REACTOR

Have you ever wanted to run a nuclear reactor? Well now's your chance! Luckily this is just a computer simulation, otherwise I would have blown up the bay area twice already!

BOMBS

This would be a great program to use for the introduction of a disk. After you type in your name, a missile falls out of the sky, and blows into each letter of your name.

PMGRPHIC

This program is really hard to explain. It seems to make "windows" in graphics mode zero, but there made out of player-missiles. I guess that the best way to try and explain it is that it looks like vertical display list interrupts... but then it takes sections of these, and moves them around!!!

THUNDER

This is the typical birds-eye view of a maze game, where your job is to escape. The trick in this game is that once it draws the screen, it disappears! From then on

you can only see a small section of the maze that surrounds you!

SYMPH3D

This program draws neat patterns in graphics mode eight. It reminded me of the Audio-Visual-Meditation program that was on last month's floppy.

KIDNAP

Here's the first of the two adventures. You wake up in a strange building, and realize that you must have been kidnapped. Your objective—ESCAPE!

OPERSAB

This is the second of the two adventures. In this adventure your objective is to destroy the ship that your in. Both of these adventures have a short documentation file that tells you the commands that the games will accept.

Well, so far these are all of the programs that I've found for the floppy, but ones that might be on the floppy are...

A pinball machine (hopefully)

Disk I/O (My copy had bugs in it, but I'm getting a good version)

That's about it for this month.

See ya at the meeting!



MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE ASKED INSTEAD OF
DEMANDED —

Review

DUANE W. RENO

COMPUTER ANIMATION PRIMER

(BYTE/McGraw Hill 1984, \$22.95), by David Fox and Mitchell Waite, is the book you should buy if you want to use all of the special graphics features of your Atari computer and are a reasonably proficient BASIC programmer.

David Fox and Mitchell Waite both have impressive credentials in the field of computer animation. Fox works for Lucasfilm Ltd. and was in charge of the development of Rescue on Fractalus, which is currently being released through an association between Lucasfilm and EPYX. Fox and Waite have both authored previous books on programming.

Part II of this book describes and provides instruction in readable English on the use of character set animation, color register animation, player-missile graphics, coarse and fine scrolling, display list interrupts, and vertical blank interrupts in Atari BASIC. It includes many interesting demonstration programs and machine language routines which can be incorporated into BASIC programs, including programs that you may write yourself. You will probably want to run these demonstration programs on your computer while you are reading the book. If you don't want to spend the time typing them out yourself, a two-sided disk containing all of the demonstration programs and the assembly language source code for the machine language routines can be purchased from Adventure International for \$19.95 plus \$3 for shipping and handling.

The first three chapters of the book (134 pages) set forth a history of motion picture animation, a history of computer animation, and a description of the mainframe and mini-computer hardware and software used by the professionals for computer animation in motion pictures and television advertising. For this reason, you will probably find this book in the computer graphics section of your bookstore rather than in the Atari-specific section. This will have an adverse impact upon sales in my opinion. Although this part of the book is also interesting and informative, I think the primary market is the Atari owner who, like me, needs more help than that provided by De Re Atari and other books which cover the same ground.

Why do the authors combine a treatise on computer animation theory and applications together with a tutorial on Atari-specific graphics? They say it is because the Atari computer is the only personal computer currently possessing display lists, hardware scrolling, and other features that are otherwise found only in mainframe computer graphics applications. Isn't that why you bought an Atari? Now you can really learn to use all of its unique capabilities.

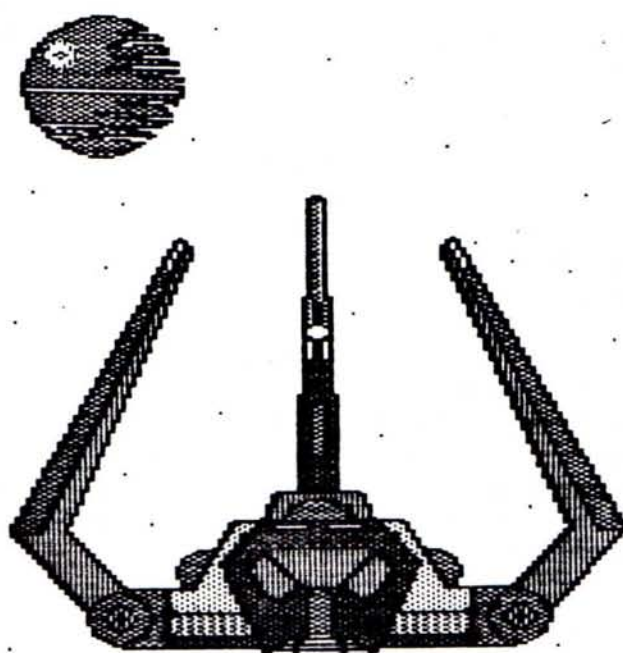
The flavor of the book is shown by the following passage, which introduces the concept of vertical blank interrupts as a means of simultaneously moving two players which have been combined into a single character:

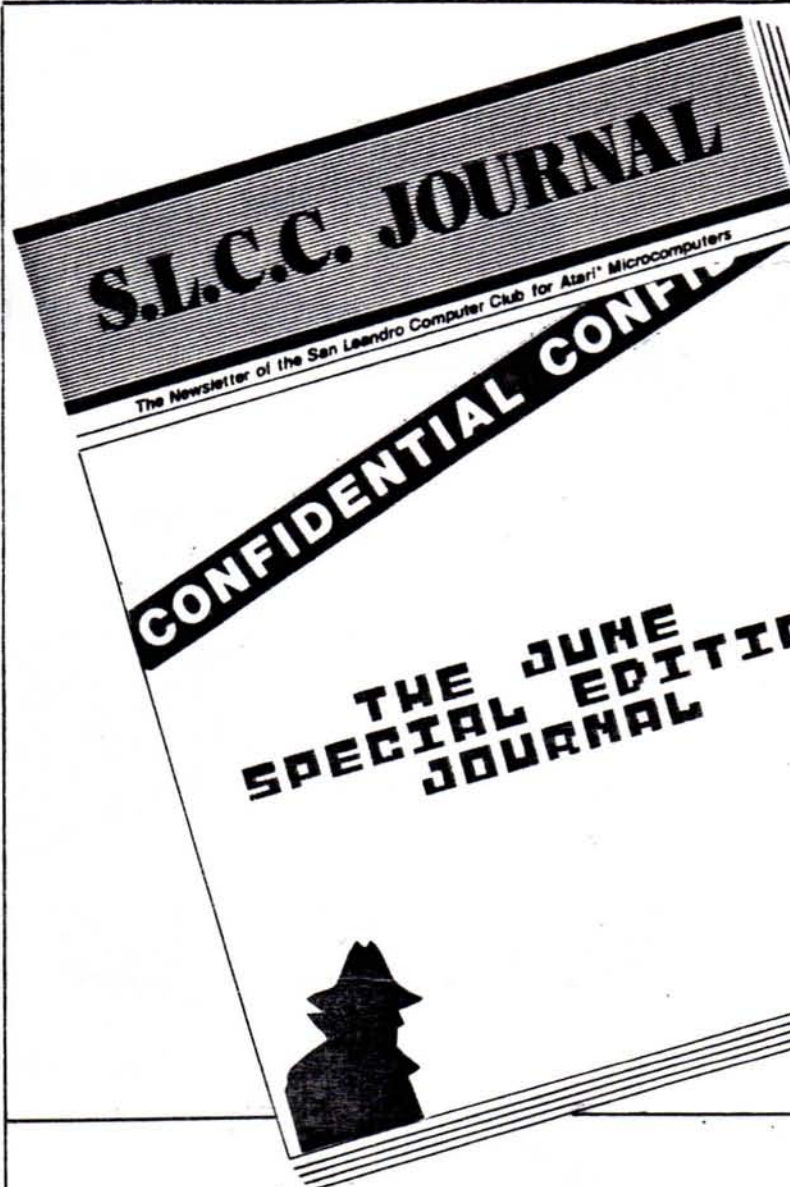
"The problem intensifies when two or more players have been combined into one larger player for increased color or

resolution. The combined player must appear to move as one player, or it may risk losing its solidity as some parts try to catch up with others. This will happen if we attempt to use BASIC to move them simultaneously. BASIC just isn't fast enough to allow the perfectly synchronized movement of players. That's the problem, and here comes our machine language routine to the rescue! The first part of the solution is to execute all horizontal player movements during the period of time (about 1400 microseconds) when the electron beam is returning from the bottom of the screen to the upper corner, called the vertical blank or vertical retrace period. In this way, the players will never move horizontally during a screen update, and the problem of tearing is solved. The second part of the solution is to have the machine language routine move all desired players vertically with one call to the routine rather than a separate call for each player. All players will appear to arrive at their new vertical positions together. Since there is no tearing problem with vertical player movement, the VBLANK (vertical blank) isn't needed and vertical movement can be executed immediately."

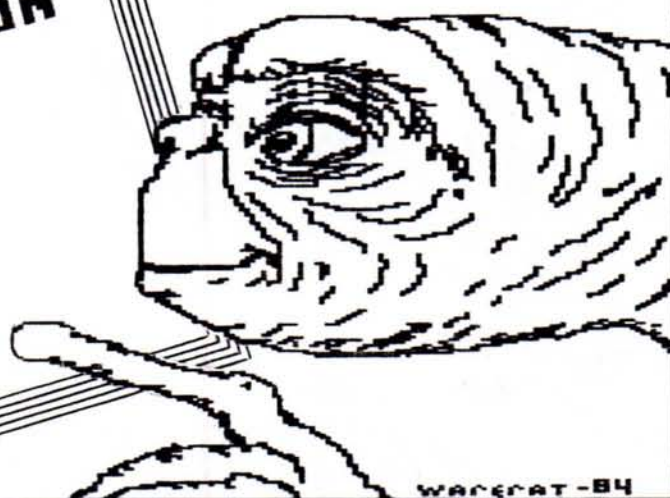
Having been thus introduced, a machine language routine is provided for the movement of players during the vertical blank period. You are taken step by step through the use of that routine and the manner in which it can be incorporated into your own programs. Other machine language routines are provided which allow you to add extra colors on the screen through display list interrupts, to scroll all or part of the screen at variable speeds, to assign constant horizontal velocities to players, and to animate players through frame flipping.

The book is profusely illustrated and is definitely a quality publication. I enjoyed reading it. If it is not at your local bookstore, you can order it from BYTE Books/McGraw-Hill Book Company, P.O. Box 400, Hightstown, NJ 08520





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TO PHONE HOME ABOUT.....**



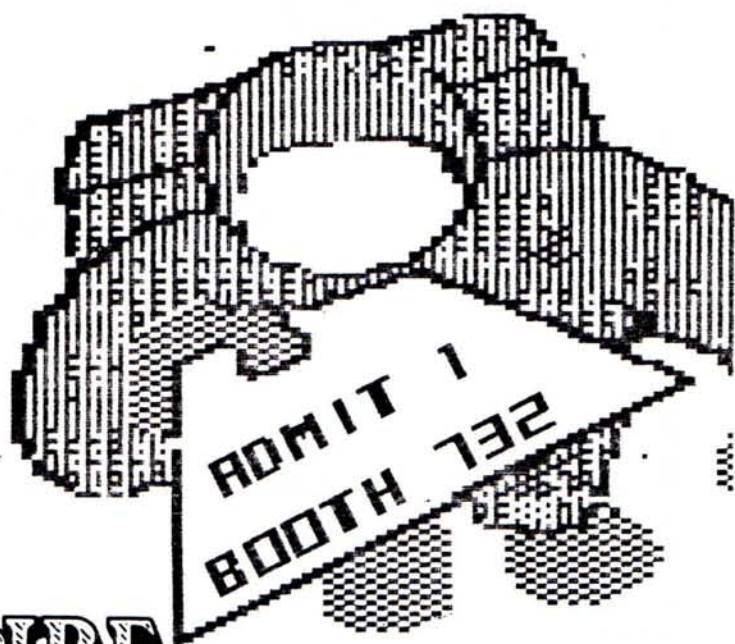
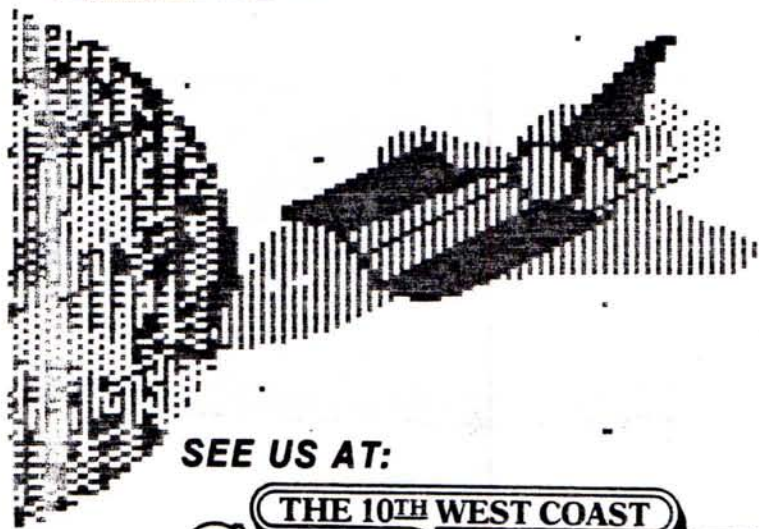
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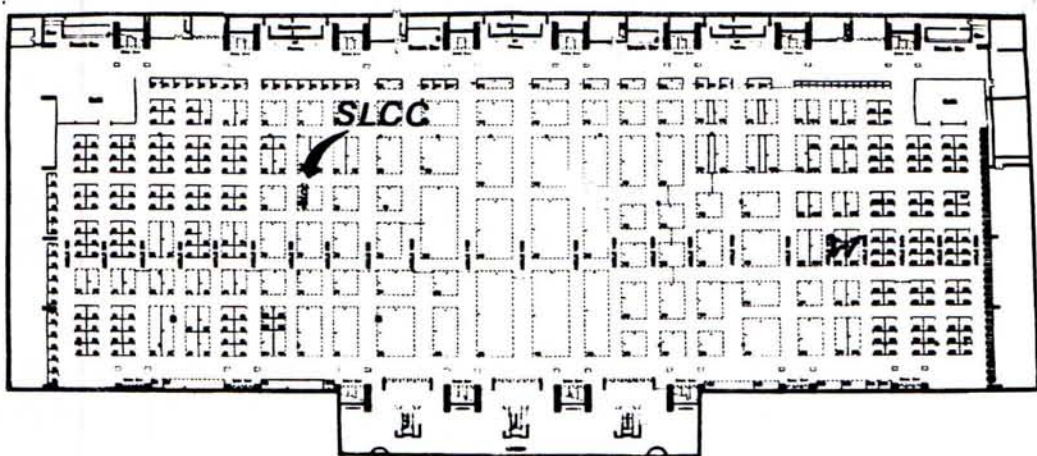
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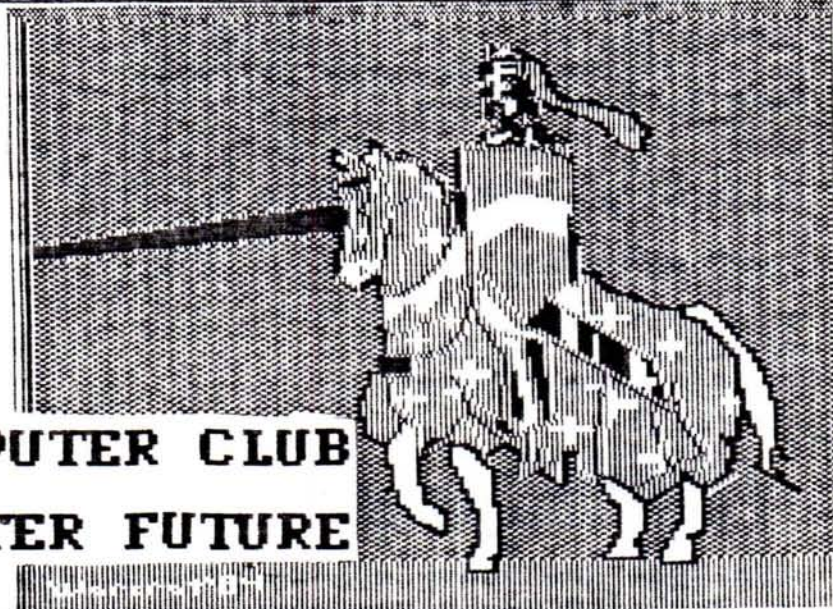
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S.L.C.C. Interface

The SLCC Interface is our monthly 'input-output' column in which you may make a short comment on club related issues, or buy-sell an item. This is not available to commercial outlets.

Also you may ask those technical questions and get them answered. All technical questions may be addressed to Frank Daniel at 632-7181. Basic language questions can be addressed to Mike Sawley at 482-5061. All buy-sell items go to Ron Seymour at 537-3183.

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ANTIC PUBLISHING is looking for a Customer Service Representative. Full-time position, requiring thorough knowledge of the Atari Computer and excellent verbal skills. Send resumes only to:

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editorial staff. Part-time position requiring 3-4 hours per day during daytime hours. Uploading-downloading, cabling, file transfer, and some programming experience required. College student preferred. Contact Nat Friedland at (415) 957-8886.

* WEST COAST COMPUTER FAIRE *

Come see the San Leandro Computer Club booth at the 10th Annual West Coast Computer Faire at Moscone Center, March 30 through April 1. See the new Atari Computer line (hopefully), giveaways, special raffle, and the famous SLCC Disk of the Month. Remember:

BOOTH #732

*** NEW MEMBERS ***

The SLCC would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members of the SLCC:

Jason Lennon
Charles R. Agostini
John Snelling
Daryle Meyers
Ken Phipps
Robert Sylvia

S.L.C.C. JOURNAL

The Newsletter of the San Leandro Computer Club for Atari® Microcomputers

P.O. Box 1525, San Leandro, CA 94577-0152

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